

Foreword

New historical scholarship over the last three decades has transformed the way we think about the American past. The telling of the American story has evolved from largely a single story told from a single perspective to a chorus of voices presenting multiple perspectives and interpretations. Out of this new scholarship developed, among others, the woman's voice. So rich was this new scholarship that it prompted a reassessment of the basic conceptualization of American history acknowledging varieties of significance and embracing the multiplicity and complexity of the human experience.

For those who labor in the field of historic preservation, this more inclusive approach to history resulted in the designation of new historic sites and the reassessment of existing ones. A special initiative beginning in 1989 sought to increase the number of National Historic Landmarks associated with women. This cooperative venture between the National Park Service, Organization of American Historians, and the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History resulted in 39 new sites being acknowledged by the Secretary of the Interior as having national significance. More work needs to be done in this regard, however, as women continue to be under-represented in the National Historic Landmark category.

Recognizing the need for the National Park Service to assume a leadership role in the assessment of existing historic properties to ensure that the woman's voice was heard, Marie Rust, Regional Director of the Northeast Region, sponsored a workshop in Lowell, Massachusetts in May 1995. Attended by scholars, preservationists, and educators, the meeting produced a resource guide titled *Exploring a Common Past: Interpreting Women's History in the National Park Service*. The pamphlet includes a review of women's history scholarship, ideas for protecting the built environment associated with women, a structure for assessing a park's interpretation of women, and a bibliography. While designed primarily for the National Park Service, managers of any historic site will find it useful. (Copies of *Exploring a Common Past* can be obtained by requesting a copy from the Chief Historian, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.)

This special issue of *CRM* reflects, in part, the effect women's history scholarship has had throughout the field of historic preservation. It will not only inform us about the possibilities that exist when we broaden our vision, but, I hope, will challenge us to add new tiles to this emerging American mosaic.

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